

SIR OSCAR OF THE HILL.

9

AN EPIC POEM

In Six Cantos,

BY

H. SACKVILLE TREHERNE.

"Quid dignum tanto feret hic promissor hiatu."

HORACE—"De Arte Poetica."

"Shall noble Albion pass without a phrase
From a bold Briton in her wonted praise."

BYRON—"Age of Bronze."

"The 'good old times'—all times when old are good—
Are gone; the present might be if it would;
Great things have been, and are, and greater still
Want little of mere mortals but their will."

BYRON—"Age of Bronze."

"I wish our clever young poets would remember my homely definition of prose and poetry; that is, prose—words in their best order; poetry—the best words in their best order."—COLERIDGE

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To Miss Tellée E. Prouding Roberts.

MY DEAR TELLÉE,—Having long felt anxious to adorn my pages with a name, at the same time classical, biblical, musical and well beloved, I venture to dedicate to you this unworthy production of an inexperienced pen, as a slight but sincere token of admiration for your genius, respect for your character, and gratitude for your friendship. If it will do nothing else it, will prove to you that the gratification I have derived from your society has not been forgotten, nor the hope abandoned of again renewing, at some future period, the acquaintance which flourished so well under the hospitable roof of Heronsgate.

Truly and sincerely,

Your affectionate friend,

H. SACKVILLE TREHERNE.

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SIR OSCAR OF THE HILL.

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CANTO I.

"One word alone can paint to thee
That more than feeling—I was Free."

BYRON—"Bride of Abydos."—Canto 2.

"Ha, ha! ha, ha!" thus loudly laugh
The followers of the knight,
"He never does a thing by half
When once he draws to fight!"
What caused the vassals thus to speak?
Why laughed they in that strain?
Who was the knight? his name I seek,
And who, too, had he slain?

m?

List, noble hearers, to the song
A wandering minstrel sings,
Who tells a story doth belong
To bards of stronger wings,
His muse, I know, is very wrong
To touch another's strings.

A knight there was of great renown,
Who was well known in every town
Upon the continent, and more,
In every town on England's shore.
And well he might be known, for he
Had thrown Sir Guy of Normandy,
Famed for his skill with shield and sword,
And feared by all with whom he warred.
A knight there was, as I have sung,
Whose deeds were told by every tongue,
Whose praises formed the minstrel's lay,
Who honours fresh gained every day.
A knight there was—a British one—
Who thought it was the greatest fun
To topple o'er a well known knight,
And break his bones in playful fight.
His name—well known in every land,
On every sea, on every strand—

Sir Oscar of the Hill, whose sire
 Had left him half of Devonshire.
 He was a man of six foot three,
 And broad to match his height.
 His brawny arms, you'll all agree,
 Ideals of strength and might,
 Were formed of muscles firm and sound,
 And harder you could not have found.
 His handsome face and graceful air
 Would well become a lady fair.
 His brow was lofty, did express
 A true idea of perfectness.
 His curly hair in clusters fell
 On shoulders that had borne so well
 The weight of armour gleaming bright
 And dazzling in the sun's clear light.
 His eyes, ah! there I'll fail, I'm sure,
 They were so bright and gay, nay more,
 They sparkled, not like Champagne's wine,
 But in a way far more divine,
 Which very seldom can be seen
 Save in a few young maids, I ween,
 As Bessie, Clara, Constance and
 Some pretty girls from Spanish land.
 So huge he was in every limb
 That nothing that formed part of him,
 Seemed framed of aught but wood and stone,
 And very iron seemed each bone.
 In form and feature, he was all
 A maid could wish to hold in thrall.

His sword—I deem it were a sin
 To liken it to anything:
 If Rodgers, cutler to the Queen,
 Lived at that time, its edges keen
 Most likely made by him had been.
 His lance—'twas longer by three feet
 Than any he had chanced to meet:
 The massy head surmounted clear
 The ashen handle of this spear.
 The point was sharp, and sure you'd wonder
 How many shields it burst asunder.

His shield, for so the heralds say,
 Was *gules* and *chevron or*,
 And that you know's the only way
 The heralds speak. It is a bore—

You never can make out at all
 The tongues they use in Heralds' Hall.
Gules, chevron or, between three deer,
 Upon his shield depicted were.

Sir Oscar, so our hist'ries say,
 Had fought the Norman band,
 Which disembarked one autumn day
 To conquer England's strand.
 At Harold's side, on Hastings' field,
 Sir Oscar's rich emblazoned shield
 Was noticed by the knights, who thought
 It best with William to have fought.
 For fighting 'gainst him William had
 Outlaw'd our knight, and all
 The lands he owned gave to Conrad,
 The Count of Epinal.

Count Conrad sent to claim the land
 A chosen number from his band;
 But Oscar did not understand
 Why Devon thus should leave his hand.
 So, arming a few vassals, he
 Set out to meet the men,
 And soon compelled them all to flee
 Back to their lord again.

Count Conrad swore, and well he might,
 At this unseemly show,
 And arming all for instant fight,
 With sword, and spear, and bow,
 Rode forth to meet Sir Oscar's troop,
 And clear his way by one fell swoop
 Of those bold Saxons, who had dared
 Oppose a knight, who'd bravely shared
 Duke William's fortunes and success.
 His troop, as near as I can guess,
 Two hundred men-at-arms are so,
 And Oscar had two score, I know;
 But Oscar's were of Saxon kin,
 While Conrad's were all Frenchmen thin.
 The knights met near where Lympstone stands,
 Unequal were th' opposing bands,
 But Oscar fought for home and lands;
 And tho' 'twas five to one, I'm sure
 The Saxons wished there had been more.
 Sir Oscar on his charger rode

Towards the fuming Count Conrad,
And, while with dignity he strode,
He swayed the flag of truce he had.

"Count Conrad, why this armed array?
Come ye to feast, or come to slay?
Come ye in peace or war?
Come ye here to brave my scorn?
Or come to blow the hunting horn?
Come ye in peace or war?"

"Sir Oscar, since the king's bestowed
These lands upon me, here I rold
To claim mine own from thee;
An outlaw art thou on the earth,
And as a Saxon by thy birth,
'Twere best to yield to me."

"Yield! yield! and pray, is that your cry?
Sir Count, I think you'd better try
To part me from mine own.
On, Saxons, on, and let him know
That Britons never yield them so,
But fight for hearth and home."

With shield on arm, and lance at rest,
Sir Oscar spurred towards the Count,
Thro' armour bright and thro' his breast
The spear unhorsed him from his mount.

"Ha, ha! ha, ha!" thus loudly laugh
The followers of the knight,
He never does a thing by half
When once he draws to fight!"

Dismayed, alarmed, the Normans rushed
Upon their dauntless foe,
While Conrad groaned, and gripped the dust,
And screamed with pain and woe
Tho' wounded sore, he watched the fight,
Where Saxon pluck and Norman might
Waged deadly war, but, to his sight,
The number of his men that bite
The dust, before the shades of night
Wrapped up the earth, was direst blight
To his fond hopes, for well he knew
No Norman host could fight those few,
And vict'ry gain, before they slow

Full thrice their count, that dauntless crew.
 But soon the fight began to tell,
 For Oscar's men had fought so well,
 That scatter'd far and wide they run,
 That host, reduced to fifty-one,
 And each bold Norman bore somewhere
 Some mark of plucky Saxon cheer.
 Count Conrad yields him with bad grace,
 While terror's painted on his face;
 He thought of tortures, dungeons cold,
 The same the Normans used of old,
 And begged and prayed his Saxon foe
 In mercy not to treat him so.
 Sir Oscar laughed in merry strain,
 And said, "Does't think that we would deign
 To soil our hands with tort'ring thee;
 A Saxon is too much a man
 To torture foes whene'er he can,
 Whoever they may chance to be."

CANTO II.

"Who hath not proved how feebly words essay
 To fix one spark of Beauty's heavenly ray?
 Who doth not feel, until his failing sight
 Faints into dimness with his own delight,
 His changing cheek, his sinking heart confess
 The might, the majesty of Loveliness."

BYRON—"Bride of Abydos"—Canto 1.

I don't know if you've ever been
 To Dawlish pebbly stand,
 Nor could I say you'd ever seen
 The cliffs upon the land;
 Those mighty cliffs, whose blood-red face
 The sea reflects below,
 And at whose broad sea-beaten base
 The fair sea-flowers grow.
 If you have not, 'tis not my fault;
 But I have, and I saw
 The blood-red cliffs, which made me halt
 And wond'ring, wonder more
 What dreadful deed had caused the rock
 To blush so very red, and shock
 That mirror—Ocean's wavy breast—
 With being so unlike the rest.

Tall, rugged, grand, the cliffs stand out
 Against the azure sky;
 While Echo answers to your shout,
 (If, when you're passing by,
 You chance to call,) and throws the sound
 To every ragged corner round.
 Upon the cliffs a wood is seen,
 And as it shows its verdure green,
 Like some vain girl on holidays,
 You hear the birds sing roundelays
 To their fond mates, or to their young,
 Who may be hid the leaves among.
 And further on, between yon crags,
 You see the fields so gay,
 Where once the noble antler'd stags
 And timid deer would play,
 And where they roamed, as blithe and free
 As stags and deer are wont to be.

Upon these glorious cliffs there stood
 Sir Oscar's castled halls,
 Surrounded by an ample wood.
 Beyond the castle walls.

A donjon keep and all were there,
 And bowers too for ladies fair.
 Let's enter thro' the frowning gate,
 And seek the chamber where of late
 Count Conrad had been ling'ring through
 An illness, which I fear that few
 But hardy, hardened men could stand
 In this degenerated land.

But why should I thus call a race
 Of men, who science deep and sage
 Personify? In every case,

You find those men, who read the page
 Of science deep, are always thin,
 And weak, and poor; their skin
 Lacks healthy ruddiness; and then

They are old men before their time;
 So why should my bad-mannered pen

Them call degen'rate in my rhyme.
 But to return. Look well around,
 The ceilings, walls and rush-strewn ground.
 That tapestry, that hangs so free,
 And pictures feats of chivalry,
 Was made by Ella, Oscar's wife,
 His heart's fond joy, his pride of life.
 That chair, so rough and coarse in looks,
 You'd only see in pictured books;
 That table, too, the very poor
 Would cast at once outside the door;
 That pallet hard a dog would spurn,
 But then necessity so stern
 Compelled our fathers to betake
 Themselves to rest on beds of straw,
 And use such couches they could make
 To raise their bodies from the floor.

The bed is occupied you see,
 A pallid form lies there;
 His sunken cheeks are pale, for he
 Knew sufferings severe.
 It is Count Conrad, whom the knight
 Had taken care of since the fight.
 And near him on a stool there sat,
 Singing a pleasant song,
 Sir Oscar's bride, for whom he'd fought,
 For whom he'd sued so long.
 The "loveliest of her sex" was she,
 A prettier you will never see.

Ella, the queen of beauty still,
 Was niece of Ulf, the Prince of Ryhl.
 To gain her Oscar had to fight
 Many a grimly visaged knight.
 Those scars you see upon his brow,
 Those scars upon his chest,
 That furrow ploughed upon his cheek,
 That mark upon his breast,
 These had he gained before the hand,
 Of Ella, fairest in the land,
 Was joined with his in wedlock's band.
 Fair Ella, now Sir Oscar's bride,
 Was seated by Count Conrad's side.
 Her hair fell down in ringlets gay,
 And rustled as the wind would play
 Upon her cheek, where rose's red
 And lily's white quite turned the head
 Of many a rough country boor,
 And made her lovers love her more.
 Her eyes were bright, aye, brighter far
 Than that fair gem the evening star;
 Her eyes were dark and flashed with glee
 As she sang sweet her melody;
 Her glance was love, and love in eyes
 Is meet reward for lover's sighs;
 Her lips were rosy red in hue;
 Her iv'ry teeth were fair to view;
 Her skin so clear, transparent white,
 Might well have seemed to lover's sight,
 A fine fair web of heavenly light.

Oh! pleasant is the song,
 And sweet is music's strain,
 When minstrels sing of other times,
 And tell us stories in their rhymes
 Of knights, and wars' alarms,
 And nations risen up in arms,
 So that one's senses long
 Those times to come again.

The words are like the dew,
 Which in the morning grey
 Falls on the hill, when yet the sun
 Has left the moon in light, when none
 Of the fair stars on high
 Have thought it time to leave the sky,
 And when the lake is blue
 And settled in the vale.*

*IMITATION.—"Pleasant are the words of the song, and lovely are the tales of other times. They are like the calm dew of the morning on the hill of roes, when the sun is faint on its side, and the lake is blue and settled in the valley."—*OSSIAN*—"Fingal," *Bk. 3.*

Her song had ceased, and bending down,
 Her face half hid in tresses brown,
 She asked Count Conrad if the air
 Had pleased him as he listened there.

He answered her— " Before I saw
 Your lovesome face an oath I swore
 To love no maiden, who should be
 No native of fair Normandy ;
 But you, fair Ella, you have made
 My soul so weak, that I'm afraid
 The only oath that I can swear
 Is to preserve from ev'ry care
 Your lovely form and beauty rare.
 I love you, Ella, as I love
 The God in the blue vault above ;
 Your slave I am, and at your feet
 My serfdom pleasantly I greet.
 For you, sweet love, Fate's fiercest storm,
 That seeks to chill my pulses warm,
 I'll brave. Fate cannot daunt me now
 I have impressed on that fair brow
 A kiss—nay, flee not thus away,
 I do but seek a tribute pay
 To her, who dazzles Phoebus' ray
 And pales the beams that hither stray ;
 Who makes the moon retire behind
 Her curtain clouds, lest she go blind
 From gazing at a face so bright,
 My love's fond hope, my soul's delight.
 Your beauties the fair stars surprise,
 And make them wink their twinkling eyes.
 What, still unkind? Know, silly child,
 Sir Oscar, though a trooper wild,
 Can't save his vast estates from me,
My gift from Will of Normandy.
 No use to weep, no use to chide,
 You must and shall become my bride.
 The outlaw knight a mate may find
 In winter's child, the cutting wind,
 For Ella, be my wife you shall
 As I am Count of Epinal."

" Is this the gratitude he gains,
 For saving from convulsive pains
 A dastard Norman's coward frame ?
 Is this the black return you give

To him who prayed that you might live ?

Oh! truly he was much to blame,
For thinking that a Norman's mind
Could turn to aught but self, and blind
With foolish, pompous pride could think
But how the spring that gave him drink,
Could be made foul with stirred-up earth,
And how he could besoil the hearth
That gave him food and shelter, when
He was deserted by his men.
And *you* would rob him of his bride ?

But that you never shall ;
For know, that I'll ne'er quit his side,
But with him rise or fall ;
The foul black glass of lust shall ne'er
Be used to soil his honour fair,
Base Count of Epinal.

* * * * *

Count Conrad roamed about the halls,
And each one thought no ill
To see him strolling round the walls,
Search ev'ry window sill,
Examine ev'ry postern door,
And scale each winding stair ;
But what 'twas puzzled them the more,
He'd have not one to share
His wand'rings through the roomy halls,
And strolls around the cold grey walls.
He searched each room, that he might find
Some secret door to stairs that wind
To some dark postern gate behind.
He tapped at ev'ry panel, where
There'd likely be another stair ;
He'd questions ask of serving-men,
As if he was Sir Oscar's friend ;
He'd make fond love to lasses, who
Had never had but boors to woo,
And kisses gave, with lavish grace,
On ev'ry damsel's ruddy face.
And so the Count by cunning craft,
Knew ev'ry secret nook,
While maids and serving-men all laughed
To see him searching look.



CANTO III.

"And now with shouts the shocking armies closed,
 To lances lances, shields to shields opposed,
 Host against host with shadowy legions drew,
 The sounding darts in iron tempest flew;
 Victors and vanquished join promiscuous cries,
 Triumphant shouts and dying groans arise."

POPE—"Iliad of Homer," Bk. 8.

"Comfort, comfort scorn of devils,
 It is true the poet sings,
 That a sorrow's crown of sorrows,
 Is remembering happier things."

TENNYSON—"Lockesley Hall."

A week had passed since Conrad's flight,
 And all within was safe and sound;
 Outside a dark, tempestuous night
 In cloudy mist swept o'er the ground;
 When at the gate a summons shrill
 Called on Sir Oscar of the Hill
 To open in King William's name,
 And yield the keep to Conrad's claim,
 And lay down arms e'er 'twas too late,
 And give up Ella as a mate
 To any Norman reprobate.
 Of course Sir Oscar mocked the Count,
 And bade him take his bride,
 And wrest the castle from his hands;
 In fact, he loud defied
 King William's pow'r, and all the troops
 Who fought on William's side.

Now listen to the angry din,
 The shouts without, the cries within;
 See issue from that grove of oak,
 Where prophet crows are wont to croak,
 From those old oaks, those aged trees
 That tremble in the squally breeze,
 That glitt'ring troop, all fully armed,
 That round the castle furious swarmed.
 These, covered by the murky robe of night,
 Which hides their actions from the Saxons' sight,
 Construct a raft: those idly fly
 A cloud of arrows to the sky.
 Within the castle walls the knight
 Was armed for fierce and instant fight,
 And gath'ring round him Saxon hearts,

Who laughed at Norman bows and darts,
 He said, "Behold the men who dare
 Attack the lion in his lair!
 Count Conrad's doings this!—see well
 You send that dastard's soul to hell:
 And aim your shafts with so great skill
 That ev'ry one a foe shall kill:
 See that your swords strike swift and strong,
 And show the Normans you belong
 To that brave race of men, whom song
 Has made renowned: see that you guard
 Our maidens from the Normans' sword."

The battle soon raged very fierce,
 And bows they break, and shields they pierce.
 The Saxons loud defiance shout,
 While 'Vive le Roy!' is heard without.

It was so dark, that no one saw
 The Normans landing four by four,
 On two small rafts, which to and fro
 Across the moat in silence go.
 Alas! it is too late: the foe,
 That like a mighty torrent flow
 Upon the unsuspecting guards,
 Have gained the hall, and shouting charge,
 With threat'ning spear and upraised sword,
 Led on by Conrad's brother Claude.
 Dark as the wave of swelling seas,
 That rush before the howling breeze,
 And roll upon a rocky coast,
 Came on that raging Norman host.
 Then shields they clang and swords they clash,
 As they each other furious slash.

But where's the Count? We'll follow him
 Through passages that, mazy, dim,
 Appear to wander everywhere,
 Across this room, now down this stair,
 Until at last he enters hot
 A lovely, charming little grot.
 There Ella sat. Her pretty cheek
 Was painted white by palsied Fear;
 A look, so eloquent and meek,
 She cast upon her maidens near;
 Upon her neck of pearly white
 There fell her hair, so brown and bright.

But when the Count rushed in upon
This timid, cowering, pretty throng
Of maidens fair,

Beneath her long and silken lashes,
She cast a thousand angry flashes,

As he stood there.

He looked forsooth a "hardy knight,
Caparisoned for instant fight;"
Beneath his helm his jetty hair
Peeped out in clust'ring curls; and there,
Across his sun-burnt cheek a scar,
Which "planted there in recent war,
Had drawn one long and blushing streak
Over the darkness of his cheek;"
His eyes flashed forth his passion strong,
And, knowing he was doing wrong,
He hesitated at the door,
And seemed to search the reedy floor
For reasoning. This Ella saw.

"What means this wild uproar?" she cried,

"Your presence does no good betide,

Come ye in peace or war?

Oh! come ye here to aid my lord,

Or do you 'gainst him turn your sword?

Come ye in peace or war?"

"Fair bride, to claim mine own I come,

My wife, my lands, my future home,

I come to claim it all.

My soldiers now, with skilful hand,

Are battling with the Saxon band,

They come to claim it all.

Sir Oscar, in his great despair,

Has suffered me to seek you here,

To know if you will come

To share my home, and share my bed,

And thus to save Sir Oscar's head,

And snatch him from the tomb."

"Wretch! liar! ingrate! coward thou!

Written plain upon thy brow

Is dastard, bastard's slave;

Think not to 'fright me to caress

That vicious lump of ugliness,

E'en Oscar's life to save."

"Oh! child of Olaf, Ella fair,
 Know that Sir Oscar's life I'll spare,
 If you will only come;
 A pris'ner bound alone he stands,
 And guarded well at my commands,
 Still, if you only come,
 I will release him from his chains,
 And spare him all the tort'ring pains
 Of a cold dungeon home;
 I'll give him back his horse and arms,
 To seek abroad war's loud alarms,
 If you will only come;
 Come, Ella, come, the horses wait
 Hard by the southern postern gate;
 Come, Ella dearest, come.
 What? you refuse? but now I'm lord,
 And by the cross upon this sword
 I swear that you shall come.
 Sir Oscar dies, and still you'll be
 My mistress, loth or willingly,
 For I am now your lord.
 For peevish tricks you'll have no time,
 From break of day to curfew chime
 You'll have to serve your lord.

And seizing Ella round the waist,
 He snatched a torch from out its place,
 And hurled the fire around the room,
 Till all, from tapestry to loom,
 Stools, tables, chairs, and bedding too,
 From one to one the fire-fiend flew.
 Then, bursting from the blazing hall,
 He hurried through the postern small
 To gain the outer air, and then
 To ride away, and leave his men
 To finish up the work begun,
 And to return when that was done.

Down in the hall, where Norman might
 With Saxon pluck maintained the fight,
 As doth a rock in Ocean stand,
 The surfy seas on ev'ry hand,
 So Oscar stood;
 As the wild waves upon it beat,
 And rough resistance always meet,
 So did the flood

Of Normans, who each time they rushed
 Were backward borne, or onward crushed,
 As by the tide ;
 As waves are parted by a rock,
 And backward roll, or by the shock
 Are hurled aside,
 So did the French to either side,
 Who with Sir Oscar's fury tried
 To cope!—In vain.
 They fall before his thirsty blade,
 As trees across a forest glade
 Fall after rain
 Has made the earth a swamp, and when
 The mighty winds, that quit their den
 Of murky cloud,
 And shrieking in their mad delight,
 Like schoolboys out of school, or flight,
 With screamings loud,
 Of flocks of geese, they hurl with force
 Their loosen'd trunks the lawns across.
 But hark ! that cry is ' Fire ! ' and whence
 Comes all this smoke, so black, so dense ?
 Now see Sir Oscar's gleaming blade ;
 Try count the strokes, so swiftly made,
 Try count the strokes, so swift, so sure.
 And number, if you can, the score
 Of foes, that fall at ev'ry sweep
 Of that brave sword, and count the heap
 Of Normans, who by it are slain
 In a large semi-circle lain.
 The Frenchmen fly before him now,
 Such ire is painted on his brow.
 And bursting from the rabble crowd,
 He headlong rushed, and cried aloud
 For Ella, but no answer came ;
 Again he cried, again, again,
 His crying was alas ! in vain.
 Disconsolate, he prays to die,
 When Will, his captain, passing by,
 Said he had seen his lady fair
 Borne off by the south-eastern stair
 By Conrad, Count of Epinal,
 Who was in fact the cause of all
 This sad commotion and disaster ;
 And so he humbly begged his master
 To live awhile, and search around
 For Ella, for, if safe and sound,

He know she faithful would remain,
And wait to be borne off again.

"And art thou gone, my cherished bride,
With robber Normans to abide?
Alas! alas! sweet Ella mine,
To think the sun again will shine
Upon my wand'ring head alone;
For now that thou indeed art gone,
And now my castle's burnt, my home
I'll find upon some sloping combe.
Oh! shall my days begin with blight,
In darkness foul, and grewsome night?
Shall Oscar, who ne'er yielded yet,
Be caught in this vile Norman's net?
Shall Saxon mothers curse my name,
And hand my story down to fame,
And say that I, a Saxon knight,
Flew forth, as like a meteor bright,
But met a dark black cloud of night,
And then—I vanished from their sight?
No! I will never yield me so;
My fame shall go where'er I go.
Until I find my Ella dear,
Until I too have rescued her,
I swear against that Norman cur
A vengeance, that shall nations stir,
A vengeance, that the world will call
The fearful curse of Epinal.
My Ella, I will rescue thee,
Wherever thou may'st hidden be.
I trust in God to find thee, love,
And to His care, who reigns above,
I leave thee safe, my darling child:
And now among the passes wild,
The mountains bleak, the sloping combes,
My men and I go seek our homes."

CANTO IV.

LUC.—"Here is a wonder, if you talk of a wonder."

HOR.—"And so it is; I wonder what it bodes."

SHAKESPEARE—"Taming of the Shrew," Act V. Sc. 2.

"Oh! bring me to her; for mine eyes
Are hungry to behold her face;
My very soul within me cries;
My very hands seem to caress her,
To see her, gaze on her, and bless her."

LONGFELLOW—"Golden Legend," Part VI.

Near where Sir Oscar's castle stood
There is a cove, made by the flood
Of the Atlantic's heaving swell.
And as the part which I now tell
Relates to this, I may as well
Describe it, if indeed I can,
Then seldom visited by man.
The Cowrie Cove, so called by some,
Was where the Saxons made their home.
You enter from the outer strand,
Where two great rocks on either hand
Form a small gorge. This stretches far
Into the sea, and forms a bar;
That joins the cliff, that overhangs
A pretty cove, where smaller gangs
Of Saxon soldiers keep look out,
And watch lest Normans prowl about.
Across this cove, the shaggy rock
Bends to receive the Ocean's shock,
And stretching far from land it braves
The fury of the angry waves.
Around this point another cove
Bursts on the view, and here there rove
Brave men, and maids, and children young,
Who laugh to hear their shouting flung
From cliff to crag, and crag to scar,
And die away in distance far.

See you yon moody man, who stands,
His pale face buried in his hands,
As 'gainst the rock he leans and sighs,
Like some fond lover to the skies.
But mark him well. Sir Oscar he,
Who threw Sir Guy of Normandy.

Now turn your gaze to where the fire

Its ruddy glowing glowed;
On face of many a sturdy squire,
On habit of the sombre friar,
Its fancy flick'ring danced,
On the projecting cliffs above,
And on the waves below,
On ev'ry object in the cove.

Around the fire, in various pose,
Were seated those, whom Norman foes
Had left to pain and woe.

That sturdy yeoman, who is drest
In homespun cloth, is Oscar's best
And bravest of his fighting men—
But warriors ev'ry one was then—
Will Carpenter the Bold, the same
Who shared Sir Oscar's brightest fame,
And now his dark and bitter shame.

He to his right—another Will—
The squire of the Hill,
Who, to distinguish from his friend,
Is called Will Cumes, for places lend
Many a name, as Hill, or Ford,
Hall, Ashton, Dunn, or Brooks, or Ward.
Around are scattered others, who
Have followed Oscar's fortune—Hugh,
And Rolf, and Ulf, and Steve, and John,
And Alva, Luke, and Allan strong.

Then spoke Will Cumes—

“Since that dread night,
When so much Saxon blood was shed,
When Oscar taught the French to fight
By splitting shield, and holm, and head,
Since that dread night the cliffs above,
Which overhang the cove, have turned
From pearly white to fiery red,

Red as a bar of iron burned.
So did the stones in Lymptone's grove,
When our bold comrades freely bled
To save Sir Oscar's cherished head.
And save his sweet and pretty wife
From endless pain and wretched life.
If she should share a Norman's bed.
And then you see yon pointed rock,
Which is so like a cross-bow stock?
D'ye know how that became so red,
As if its very heart had bled?

When you, and Rolf, and Steve, and John,
 Were pitching in full well and strong,
 I, sore fatigued with splitting crowns,
 And quite disgusted with the hounds,
 Came down yon path to bathe my face,
 And, looking for a handy place,
 I saw my aunt—you know her, Hugh,
 She was e'en over fond of you,
 My maiden aunt—I saw her swim
 To yonder rock, in twilight dim;
 She reached it safe, and clinging there
 I saw her bosom lay all bare,
 For a shift alone was all she had.
 You would have said that she was mad,
 To see her hair dishevelled there,
 And playing with the stormy air.
 And while I wondered what could be,
 The cause of her long swim to sea,
 I heard close by a fiendish shout,
 As if the imps of hell were out
 And running wild, and, from a nook
 Where I could safely take a look,
 I saw three Norman archers bold,
 So *brave*, that e'en a woman old
 They would attack, and trust 'tis truth,
 They drew their arrows, and forsooth,
 They aimed them at her legs and arms,
 That tortures might have greater charms.
 One drew again, alas! it sped
 Before my axe could reach his head.
 The shaft went true, and on her breast
 Her head fell down—she was at rest.
 No more she'd hear their brutal cries,
 No more they'd play their devilries
 Upon her form—she'd sunk to rest
 Upon the Ocean's surfy breast.
 Next morn I looked, and lo! the shock
 Had changed to red the 'Old Maid Rock.'
 But ah! who's this? 'Tis Alf, I'm sure,
 With Harry running on before."

Down the steep hill, with eager shout,
 They quickly climbed, and crying out,—
 "Good news! good news! our queen is found!"
 They bounded lightly to the ground.
 Now see what change has taken place
 In Oscar's pale and anxious face.

" Good news, indeed, my honest lads,
 Good news to cheer my drooping heart;
 But tell me all, that she is well
 As when it was our fate to part!
 And tell me where she is! and where
 That dastard thief has hidden her!
 And where's the Count? and does he woo
 His captive as he used to do?
 Or has he yet compelled my wife"——
 " Stay, stay, Sir Knight, upon my life,
 You ask for more than I can tell.
 Your bride is with the Count; is well;
 And though the wretch doth often strive
 To gain her love and make her live
 A mistress to his vicious will,
 He's found that Oscar of the Hill
 Is so much in her thoughts and mind
 That all his love, like idle wind,
 Doth pass unheeded by, while she
 Will answer with a homily.
 Count Conrad, with his captive fair,
 Is staying with Sir Charles, his friend,
 At Okehampstead, indeed the pair
 Of knights to Nick I'd like to send.
 With pillaging the villeins round,
 And burning homesteads to the ground,
 This pretty pair drag out the day
 And then they say all Saxons should
 Be rooted out, because the brood
 Is only fit for French to slay.
 And so each night the blazing skies
 Re-echo forth the piercing cries
 Of murdered men and ravished dames,
 Who fall by sword, or by the flames,
 Or are in rows hung on the boughs
 To form repasts for hungry crows.
 Redress our wrongs, most noble knight,
 Take up our cause in honest fight;
 Let not the coward Norman crew
 Say that no one, not even you,
 Took up the cause of Saxons slain,
 That no one thought to ease the pain
 Of Saxon maidens in distress,
 Or children rendered fatherless."

CANTO V.

"The second, with a bearded face,
 Stood singing in the market place,
 And stirred with accents deep and loud
 The hearts of all the listening crowd."

LONGFELLOW—"By the Fireside—The Singers."

Within Okehamstead's stately halls
 The Normans sat around the board,
 And truth to say, those grand old walls
 Had never seen their present lord
 Feast there so large a number yet,
 Of knights and ladies, pages too;
 And there below the salt there sat
 The men-at-arms, and then a few
 Old Saxon serfs, who with the land
 Had come to Norman Charles's hand.
 But hearken to the clattering gate!
 Who can it be that knocks so late?
 An aged pilgrim passing by
 Seeks Norman hospitality.
 Sir Oscar, for none else is he,
 Was brought before the jolly three,
 Count Conrad, and Sir Charles, and one,
 Whose name was Waldo Wolfenspun.
 There timid, frightened sat the bride
 Who had been torn from Oscar's side;
 Count Conrad's arm was round her slender waist,
 And Oscar wished to give his heart a taste
 Of Saxon steel, but sighing low.
 He managed to bend down a bow.
 "And who are you?" Sir Charles first said,
 "And pray how do you gain your bread?"
 Said Waldo Wolfenspun, "And where
 Do you hail from, my jolly frere?"
 Count Conrad asked.

"My name is Paul;
 Upon a pilgrimage to Rome;
 Cloistered Wells I call my home,
 Though 'tis girt round by convent wall.
 I am a Friar, yet often deign
 To sing a song of merry vein,
 To fight a round, to drink a glass,
 To trip a dance, to kiss a lass;
 But now, upon a pilgrimage,
 I e'en must always act the sage,

And only talk in Latin tongue,
 And never enter into fun,
 And never drink a social glass,
 And never kiss a pretty lass,
 And never fight, and never swear,
 And from all dancing must forbear,
 A sober pious man am I,
 And so I seek your charity."

That night, not once, tho' often tried,
 Could he get near to Ella's side.
 And so, at early dawn, he met
 His gallant band, who 'gan to fret
 Because they had no work as yet.

That fickle Goddess, Fortune, seemed
 To turn her wheel once more;
 For when next morn in splendour beamed
 Upon the earth, which slept and dreamed
 Of Nature's bounteous store,
 Sir Oscar saw the Norman knights
 With men-at-arms, (whose many fights
 Helped the strong wine to brutalize
 Their features fierce, and blear their eyes,)
 Set out upon their pillages,
 To sack and burn the villages,
 And murder all, both man and maid,
 They chanced to meet upon their raid.

Sir Oscar then, in minstrel's dress,
 So well disguised, that none would guess
 In that old man a Saxon knight,
 That that weak arm knew how to fight,
 Those tottering legs could press a horse,
 And that broad chest had felt the force
 Of many an encounter fierce,
 Where spear's sharp heads were apt to pierce
 The shields of the opposing foe.
 And wherefore should they think them so?
 For Oscar seemed a man, whom Age
 And Grief conducted on,
 To finish up Life's pilgrimage
 On earth. But to my song!
 He gained the court, where loit'ring stood
 A number of the kitchen brood,
 Cooks, scullions, pages and
 Some waiting maids from Norman land.

He begged for food, and when they said
 That he must purchase first his bread,
 He struck his harp with plaintive note,
 And as he set the tune afloat,
 He sang a lover's melody,
 A pretty little song, which he
 Had heard his Ella sing before
 That dreadful night on Dawlish shore.

When from the east all bright
 The sun first greets the sight,
 I sing of thee, my love;
 When working or at rest,
 With love my heart possessed,
 I sing of thee, my love;

When sweet the abbey bells
 Soft echo through the dells
 I sing of thee, my love;
 Their peal is soft and clear,
 And to my list'ning ear
 They sing of thee, my love;

When eve's sweet odours rise,
 My longing spirit sighs,
 It thinks of thee, my love;
 The whispers of the leaves,
 The murmurs of the breeze,
 All sing of thee, my love;

When sleep long-sought denies
 To ease my weary eyes,
 I think of thee, my love;
 And night becomes as day,
 When in my heart I say
 Sweet dreams to thee, my love.

Should sadness fill my mind,
 My comfort here I find,
 In thoughts of thee, my love;
 Should joy my spirit fill,
 I think of thee, love, still,
 And ever praise thee, love.

When birds sing in the sky,
 My senses make reply,
 And sing of thee, my love;
 And all the beasts that live
 With joy their praises give,
 And sing of thee, my love.

When cares my peace molest,
 I strive to fill my breast
 With thoughts of thee, my love;
 And to the azure skies
 My soul with ardour cries
 For blessings on thee, love.

What have I then to fear ?
 When hourly do I hear
 All nature praise thee, love ;
 And ever shall my song,
 With passion wild and strong,
 Be of thy charms, my love.

" Oh ! sir, that is my lady's song.
 Alas ; her grief's so wild and strong,
 I fear we will not have her long,
 The kindest mistress o'er us here.
 She is so kind, she is so fair,
 There's no one that you can compare
 Her to, except our Lady dear.
 Count Conrad, cruel brute he is,
 Has stolen her away, I wis,
 From some poor outlaw'd Saxon knight,
 Who's got enough to do to fight,
 To keep his head from conquering foes,
 Without redressing ladies' woes."

" And can I see, my pretty maid,
 This lady fair you talk about ?
 For if there's grief to be allayed,
 'Tis music, not the warlike shout
 Of raging lord and he who dares
 To meddle with a knight's affairs,
 'Tis music that alone can bring
 Forth love, and that you hear I sing."

" Nay, nay, old man, the Count has said
 That no man living shall be wed
 To Lady Ella save himself.
 Besides, his orders were, that none
 Should be admitted to her room,
 Except himself and Wolfenspun,
 His ugly ill-bred German groom."

" Count Conrad never knew that I
 Should at this time be passing by.
 A minstrel, as you see, I roam ;
 No place call I my cherished home.
 To knights I sing of war's alarms,
 And of their fathers' feats of arms,
 And of the battles they have won.
 But to their dames my rebel tongue
 Will sing of love, that soft sweet spell,
 That ladies only know too well ;

To those who weep some distant lord
 I sing of Constancy's reward,
 And show them how the brave will come,
 And bring his hard-won laurels home;
 To those whom Grief, that tyrant grim,
 Has caused their eyes in tears to swim,
 I sing of love, and rest at last
 To all, when Life's rough journey's past.
 So therefore let me see, fair maid,
 This charming bride. Be not afraid!
 I'll only seek to cheer her heart,
 And that I'll do e'er I depart."

His suasive manner was so strong,
 That Clotilde did not hold out long,
 But led him by a devious stair
 To where the bower maidens were;
 And in their midst fair Ella sat,
 Unmindful of their girlish chat,
 Their laughter gay, their smiling eyes,
 But wrapped her soul in tears and sighs.
 The minstrel bent upon his knee,
 And as he kissed the lady's hand,
 "Sore grieved am I," he said, "to see
 The fairest flow'ret in the land
 Thus bowed down with misery."
 And then he struck his harp and sung
 These stirring words, which round her flung
 A halo of delight, for she
 Knew well the soothing melody.

Weep on, weep on, for well you know,
 Your Oscar would not treat you so;
 But he will come with all his band,
 And save you from a tyrant's hand.

Weep on, weep on, fair Beauty's bride,
 What if from you a wall divide
 Your liberty! for Oscar's sword
 Knows how to strike as well as ward.

Weep on, weep on, for in the wood,
 Where lovely Ella often stood,
 Who knows but that Sir Oscar's band
 Are hiding? and are near at hand?

Weep on, weep on, and see you do
 What I shall soon have told to you;
 For know that then no more you'll see
 Sad grieving sorrow's misery.

"What do you mean? and who are you?
 And what is it I have to do?"
 Fair Ella cried, but all she heard
 Was one soft spoken little word—
 'To-night.'

"A wand'ring minstrel I,
 Who happened to be passing by,
 And hearing that your heart was sad,
 And that you once a true love had,
 I sought admission, that I might
 Attempt to make your heart more light."
 Then, taking her soft hand in his,
 And, as he knelt to give a kiss,
 He placed therein a tablet small,
 Unseen by all within the hall.
 And bidding her farewell once more
 He hurried through the open door.
 Upon the tablet there was writ—
 'At midnight, near the window sit,
 And place therein a taper tall,
 And, when the hour-glass' sand doth fall,
 Place there two more, for have no fear,
 Sir Oscar and his men are near.
 Make ready then to seek retreat
 Where honeysuckles bloom so sweet,
 Where noble oaks fair shadows make,
 For to the woods our way we take,
 And over hill and over dale,
 Until we gain that pleasant vale,
 Where Ulf will be well pleased to see
 His niece once more at liberty.'



CANTO VI.

"Last came Joy's ecstatic trial,
 He, with vine crown advancing,
 First to the lively pipe his hand addressed;
 But soon he saw the brisk awak'ning viol,
 Whose sweet entrancing voice he loved the best."
 WM. COLLINS—*'The Passions.'*

'Twas midnight, and a taper bright
 Was lighting up the darksome night,
 And Ella sat in great affright,
 Lest something should befall her knight.
 Upon the window brightly shone
 The taper's light, there was but one,
 But two it seemed, the black-robed night
 Reflected back the taper's light.
 Fair Ella eagerly gazed on
 The hour-glass' sand as it ran down,
 And wond'ring, wondered all the more
 At what she'd never watched before—
 The tiny sand run trickling down,
 Without a stop, without a sound.

"How slowly it runs down," she cried,
 This trembling, pretty, eager bride,
 "How slowly it runs down, I'm sure
 The half-hour's past, and yet there's more
 Than half the sand still in the glass!
 When will it end? No hour has past
 So slowly as this hour seems to.
 Whatever should I have to do,
 If Conrad comes to seek me, when
 My Oscar's here and all his men?"

Run down, run down, you tiny sand,
 There's darkness over all the land,
 My Oscar waits.

Run down, and hurry on the hour,
 E'en let old Time so darkly low'r,
 My Oscar waits.

Run down, all eager here to come
 To bear me to a distant home,
 My Oscar waits.

The stars are shining bright o'erhead,
 The moon you see has gone to bed,
 My Oscar waits.

Run down, run down, you tiny sand,
I wish to join my Oscar's band,
My Oscar waits.

"Oh! will this tiresome sand stand still!
And will that lower glass ne'er fill!
And must I linger here, when more
Than two long hours have passed, I'm sure!
Oh! if Count Conrad saw the light,
And found me dressed for instant flight,
And if this signal caught his eye,
What should I do? I'm sure I'd die."

Wink, taper, wink, my love
Is waiting for me now,
Fond passion in his eye,
And care upon his brow;
In harness bound he stands beside
His gallant charger's heaving side.
He waits the hour! he waits the hour!

Wink, taper, wink, your light
Must tell my Oscar's band,
Who, hidden by the night,
Are waiting close at hand,
That Ella is prepared to flee
From these wild knights of Normandy.
She waits the hour! she waits the hour!

Wink, taper, wink, the bride
Must seek her warmest hood,
And hasten to the side
Of Oscar, brave and good;
Then, wink, my taper, wink and tell
My Oscar that it all goes well.
And 'tis the hour! and 'tis the hour!

"Right glad am I at length the last
Small grain of sand the bridge has past;
And now, my Oscar, come and free
Your Ella from the misery
Of cruel Norman tyranny.
There stand the three long tapers now,
They will the right room plainly show.
Come, Oscar, come. Your Ella waits,
And opens wide her arms, the gates
To love, so strong and deep and wild.
Who's that? the Count! I see 'tis will'd
I never shall escape from him.
What made him come the very time
I was preparing for my flight?
I hope he won't perceive the light!"

"My dearest love! and is that you?
 I thought to find, believe 'tis true,
 You safe and sound asleep in bed.
 What could have put in that fair head
 The thought of sitting up so late,
 As if you waited for your mate?
 Ah! what is that? a signal sure!
 Ho! varlets, guards at ev'ry door;
 No Saxon churl shall enter here
 To carry off my sweet, my dear,
 My pretty songster from her lord,
 So long as I can wield a sword."

"Nay, nay, Sir Count, no signal this;
 And as to Saxon churls, I wis,
 None will attempt to come near here,
 They know too well Count Conrad's cheer."

"It may be so, but still I fear
 It is some signal, Ella dear.....
 The night is dark, the terrace cool,
 Too long have I been made your fool;
 Come, get your hood, to-night you'll find
 It is not well to be unkind
 To Conrad, Count of Epinal.
 For I have sworn by great and small,
 By God and imp, by saint and knave,
 By monk's sad tomb, by Death's cold grave,
 By fondest love, and fiercest hate,
 That I shall now no longer wait
 Upon your whims. Come, let us walk
 Upon the terrace, where to talk
 Beneath pale Cynthia's misty light
 Is sweetest pleasure of the night.
 I too have sworn that, by my head,
 To-night to me you shall be wed."

"Sir Count, you know I said last night
 That never would my troth I plight
 To you, and e'er I share your bed
 I would be numbered with the dead.
 My hood I cannot find beside,
 So here I stay whate'er betide."

"Now come you shall, my pretty hind,
 And, since your hood you cannot find,
 Without one come, for never mind
 A cold chill killing you, ha, ha!
 The grave-yard is not very far."

'In at the window, in at the door',
 Sir Oscar's men in swarms now pour,
 And Oscar from the Count soon tore
 His pretty Ella, while brave Will
 Cries out, "Ne'er mind a sharp cold chill
 Of steel just killing you, ha, ha!
 The grave-yard is not very far."
 And, as he cries out, through and through
 He runs Count Conrad, while bold Hugh
 A flaming brand tears from its place,
 And plunging it in Conrad's face,
 Cries out, "Now, dastard, call to mind
 The castle you so very kind
 And thoughtful set on fire,
 In hopes to make a funeral pyre
 For those bold Saxons, who held out
 Against a coward Norman rout."
 Then setting fire to bed and chair,
 And to the curtains hanging there,
 The tables, stools, embroid'ry frames,
 Where soon enveloped in the flames.

The Normans rushed out from the place,
 And found themselves stand face to face
 With those, whom they had thought to kill
 With brave Sir Oscar of the Hill.

